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Zakharov Denies He Spied

*'I Was Set Up,'
Soviet Says of FBI*

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NEW YORK, Sept. 16—Soviet spy suspect Gennadi Zakharov, speaking to reporters for the first time since his arrest, denied today that he was involved in any espionage activities and attributed his arrest to "an atmosphere of spy mania."

Appearing at a hastily called news conference at the Soviet Mission here, Zakharov repeatedly insisted that he was set up by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and said there was no connection between his case and that of Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for U.S. News & World Report.

"I was set up," Zakharov said. "Mr. Daniloff was detained in my country for espionage. He was officially indicted for his activities."

Flanked by three Soviet officials, a generally cheerful Zakharov, who has grown a mustache since his Aug. 23 arrest, waited for questions to be repeated to him in Russian even though he is fluent in English. The event appeared to be designed to parallel the news conference Daniloff held in Moscow on Sunday.

Calling his arrest a "provocation," Zakharov said he believed it was designed to "undermine or undercut relations" between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Zakharov said he was physically hurt during his arrest and was surprised to find that the men who apprehended him were FBI agents. "I thought they were terrorists because so many Russian citizens are subject to threats here," he said.

Zakharov complained that he was not able to consult with Soviet authorities until six hours after his arrest, adding that the time he spent in a "cold and damp" cell was psychologically difficult for him.

A physicist employed by the United Nations, Zakharov acknowledged that he obtained "research" materials from a Queens College computer major, whom he called "John." He said John had placed an ad on a college bulletin board, offering his research and technical expertise.

But U.S. officials said Zakharov first recruited the informant, a permanent resident alien from Guyana, when the informant was a student at the college in 1983.

"As far as secret or confidential materials were concerned, I never asked for them," Zakharov said. "I was completely surprised when John gave me a package which contained secret documents."

He also denied paying John \$1,000, although he admitted he was carrying a "great deal of money" at the time of his arrest. Zakharov also said he believed that John's decision to become an American citizen brought "heavy-handed pressure" on him, forcing him to go to the FBI.

Soviet officials at the mission barred several reporters, photographers and camera crews from attending the news conference. Evgeny Kutonoy, a Soviet delegate to the United Nations, said this occurred because of limited space. He reminded reporters that Soviet journalists were not invited to attend Daniloff's news conference two days ago in Moscow.

Zakharov and Daniloff were released from prison Friday to the custody of their respective ambassadors in an arrangement worked out between the two governments.

The FBI, responding to Zakharov's charges, issued a statement saying that the bureau's affidavit seeking search and arrest warrants and Zakharov's indictment "both met the requirements of probable cause."

"The FBI will not add credibility to today's assertions by Mr. Zakharov and has no further comment," the statement said.